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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

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Claims 1, 10, 38, 48, 54 and 55 are amended as follows.

Claims 11, 57, 58 and 60-63 are cancelled as follows.

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) A method for selectively increasing the amount of at least one metal recovered from metal-containing soil comprising consisting essentially of:
(a) adjusting the pH of the soil from an initial pH to a raised pH of 5.6 to 7.0; and
(b) cultivating at least one metal-hyperaccumulator plant in the soil having the raised pH under conditions sufficient to permit said at least one plant to accumulate said at least one metal from the soil in above-ground tissue,

wherein the at least one metal-hyperaccumulator plant is selected from the group consisting of nickel-hyperaccumulator plants that accumulate about 1000 mg or more of nickel per 1 kg dry weight of plant tissue.

Claim 2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said at least one metal is nickel.

Claim 3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the pH of the soil is elevated by adding to the soil at least one agent that results in an increase in the soil pH.

Claim 4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein the at least one agent that results in an increase in the soil pH is selected from the group consisting of limestone, dolomitic limestone, lime, hydrated lime, limestone equivalents, and mixtures thereof.

Claims 5 to 7. (Cancelled)

Claim 8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said at least one plant is an Alyssum plant.

Claim 9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 8, wherein said Alyssum plant is selected from the group consisting of: *A. murale*, *A. pintodasilvae*, *A. serpyllifolium*, *A. malacitanum*, *A. lesbiacum*, *A. fallacinum*, *A. argenteum*, *A. bertolonii*, *A. tenium*, *A. heldreichii*, *A. corsicum*, *A. pterocarpum*, *A. caricum* and combinations thereof.

Claim 10. (Currently Amended) A method for recovering nickel from nickel-containing soil comprising consisting essentially of:

(a) adjusting the pH of the soil from an initial pH to a raised pH of 5.6 to 7.0;
(b) cultivating at least one nickel-hyperaccumulator plant in the soil having the raised pH under conditions such that at least 0.1% of the above-ground tissue of said at least one plant, on a dry weight basis, is nickel;
(c) harvesting said at least one plant; and

(d) recovering nickel from said harvested plant.

Claim 11. (Cancelled)

Claim 12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 10, wherein in step (d), the nickel is recovered by drying and combusting the harvested plant to oxidize and vaporize organic material present.

Claim 13. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein said at least one plant is an Alyssum plant.

Claim 14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 13, wherein said Alyssum plant is selected from the group consisting of: *A. murale*, *A. pintodasilvae*, *A. serpyllifolium*, *A. malacitanum*, *A. lesbiacum*, *A. fallacinum*, *A. argenteum*, *A. bertolonii*, *A. Teniu*, *A. heldreichii*, *A. corsicum*, *A. pterocarpum*, *A. caricum* and combinations thereof.

Claim 15. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, wherein said Alyssum plant is selected from the group consisting of: *A. corsicum G16*, *A. murale G69*, *A. murale G82* and combinations thereof.

Claim 16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 10, wherein about 2.5% or more of the above-ground tissue of said at least one plant, on a dry weight basis, is nickel.

Claim 17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein about 3.0% or more of the above-ground tissue of said at least one plant, on a dry weight basis, is nickel.

Claim 18. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein about 4.0% of the above-ground tissue of said at least one plant, on a dry weight basis, is nickel.

Claims 19 to 37. (Cancelled)

Claim 38. (Currently Amended) A method for decontaminating metal-containing soil, comprising consisting essentially of cultivating at least one hyperaccumulator plant in metal-containing soil,

whereby the pH of the soil is maintained between 5.6 and 7.0;

whereby the concentration of metal in the above-ground plant tissue of said at least one hyperaccumulator plant exceeds the concentration of metal in said soil by a factor of at least 2;

wherein the at least one metal-hyperaccumulator plant is selected from the group consisting of nickel-hyperaccumulator plants that accumulate about 1000 mg or more of nickel per 1 kg dry weight of plant tissue.

Claim 39. (Original) The method of claim 38, wherein the at least one hyperaccumulator plant exceeds the concentration of metal in said soil by a factor of 3.

Claim 40. (Original) The method of claim 39, wherein the at least one hyperaccumulator plant exceeds the concentration of metal in said soil by a factor of 4.

Claims 41 to 47. (Cancelled)

Claim 48. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one metal is nickel, wherein said plant further accumulates at least one other metal selected from the group consisting of nickel, cobalt, palladium, rhodium, ruthenium, platinum, iridium, osmium, rhenium and mixtures thereof.

Claim 49. (Cancelled)

Claim 50 to 53. (Cancelled)

Claim 54. (Currently Amended) A method for selectively increasing the amount of at least one metal recovered from metal-containing soil comprising consisting essentially of:
(a) adjusting the pH of the soil from a first pH to a second pH of 5.6 to 7.0; and
(b) cultivating at least one metal-hyperaccumulator plant in the soil having the second pH under conditions sufficient to permit said at least one plant to accumulate said at least one metal from the soil in above-ground tissue,

wherein the at least one metal-hyperaccumulator plant is selected from the group consisting of nickel-hyperaccumulator plants that accumulate about 1000 mg or more of nickel per 1 kg dry weight of plant tissue.

Claim 55. (Currently Amended) A method for recovering nickel from nickel-containing soil comprising consisting essentially of:

- (a) adjusting the pH of the soil from a first pH to a second pH of 5.6 to 7.0;
- (b) cultivating at least one nickel-hyperaccumulator plant in the soil having the second pH under conditions such that at least 0.1% of the above-ground tissue of said at least one plant, on a dry weight basis, is nickel;
- (c) harvesting said at least one plant; and
- (d) recovering nickel from said harvested plant.

Claim 56. (Cancelled)

Claim 57. (Cancelled)

Claim 58. (Cancelled)

Claim 59. (Cancelled)

Claim 60. (Cancelled)

Claim 61. (Cancelled)

Claim 62. (Cancelled)